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# Innovations Affecting Us — Podcasting, Coursecasting, and the Library

Column Editor: **Kristen DeVoe** (Pittsburgh, PA) <devoek@verizon.net>

Within the last year or so, podcasting has become a familiar term for many people, and it looks like it is more than just a passing fad. You have probably heard of podcasting, you may listen to podcasts on your own computer or **MP3** player and you may even create podcasts of your own. The same thing goes for your library's users, and podcasting is an innovation that many libraries will want to take a closer look at when deciding how information is presented to users.

Podcasts and podcasting have become so popular that podcast was named the 2005 word of the year by the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, and it will appear in the 2006 online update of that publication. Defined as "a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program, made available on the Internet for downloading to a personal audio player," podcasting is an innovation that is having an increasing affect on libraries, librarians, and information seekers.

## What is A Podcast?

Generally a podcast is a downloadable audio broadcast. Although the term podcasting is often associated with **MP3** files and audio data, it is not limited to audio content. One other use for this technology includes downloadable video content, sometimes called "vlogging" or "vodcasting."

Users can download individual podcast episodes or subscribe to podcasts so they are automatically downloaded to **iTunes** or a similar podcatching client such as **iPodder** or **jPodder** as they become available. Although the name is derived from **Apple Computer's** ever-popular **iPod** (combining **iPod** with broadcast or broadcasting), users are not limited to that spe-

cific device and can listen to podcasts in a variety of ways including on their personal computer or on any digital music player. Part of the appeal of podcasts is that users can listen to these audio files whenever they want, wherever they want, as often as they want, and on the device of their choice.



When it comes to topics, podcasts cover almost anything and everything from technology and computers to cooking, health, sports, news, and more. Take a look at some podcast directories such as **Podcasting News**, **iPodder.org**, and **Podcast.net** to get an

idea of what is available. In addition to individually produced podcasts, some more traditional broadcasting entities such as the **BBC** and **NPR** have picked up on podcasting as well.

## It's So Easy

Another appealing aspect of podcasting is the level of simplicity that is involved with creating and subscribing to podcasts. To create a podcast, all you really need is a microphone, Internet connection, and recording software. After recording the audio content, the podcast creator can save the file in **MP3** format and add a link to the podcast in an **RSS** feed. Podcast listeners can then enter this feed URL into a podcatching program such as **iTunes**, **iPodder**, or **jPodder** which will retrieve and process the data from the feed URL. Podcatching services are generally set to always run, start when the computer is turned on, and downloads updates at specific intervals such as every day or every hour. Alternatively, the user can also download specific podcast installments if they do not wish to subscribe to the feed.

## Coursecasting: Podcasting's Educational Niche?

Demographically, those who are downloading podcasts are in the same age bracket as many college or university students which may be why a number of major educational institutions have embraced the ability to broadcast various kinds of audio programming to **MP3** players and personal computers. Sometimes called coursecasting or, less frequently, podology, the portability and familiarity of electronic media is appealing to college and university students and may serve as a useful supplement to their courses. Students can use the course lectures and other materials to review for tests, clarify their notes, or catch up in the event that they miss a lecture.

This past year six institutions have worked with **Apple Computer** testing a service that makes podcasts of course content available to students: **Brown**, **Duke**, **Stanford Universities**, **University of Michigan School of Dentistry**, **University of Missouri School of Journalism** and **University of Wisconsin** at Madison. This free service, called **iTunes U** (**iTunes University**) was announced recently as a service that will allow institutions and instructors to set up collections of materials that are accessed using the **iTunes** software, which is free to download. Institutions participating in **iTunes U** will have the opportunity to brand their portion of **iTunes** with pictures of the school mascot, colors, or emblem and will be able to restrict access to files or make them available for anyone. Additionally, students will be able to access **iTunes U** podcasts through course management systems such as **Blackboard**, **WebCT**, and **Sakai**.

As mentioned earlier, **iTunes** and **iPods** are not necessary to create or listen to podcasts. Likewise, **iTunes U** is not necessary for universities and colleges to make course content available as a podcast. Several other institutions have been experimenting with programs of their own to make podcasts of course lectures and other course related audio files available for download. The **University of Cincinnati**, **Purdue University**, and the **University of Wisconsin** are among institutions that are experimenting with making course content available as podcasts.

## Libraries and Coursecasting

Some libraries are already using podcasting by making instruction sessions for various library materials available as podcasts or by creating podcasts that promote library services, but with the increasing use of podcasting for course content what will the role of the library be? Traditionally libraries have been responsible for print and electronic course

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## Some Relevant Links:

**Podcast Directories-Podcasting News** — <http://www.podcastingnews.com/forum/links.php>

**Podcast Directories-iPodder.org** — <http://www.ipodder.org/directory/4/podcasts>

**Podcast Directories-Podcast.net** — <http://www.podcast.net/>

**iTunes U** — [http://www.apple.com/education/solutions/itunes\\_u/](http://www.apple.com/education/solutions/itunes_u/)

**Stanford on iTunes** — <http://itunes.stanford.edu/>

**WildCast-University of Wisconsin**

**Washington County** — <http://washington.uwc.edu/library/rss/default.asp>

**Purdue University-BoilerCast** — <http://boilercast.itap.purdue.edu:1013/Boilercast/>

**BBC Podcasts** — <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/downloadtrial/subscribe.shtml>

**NPR Podcast Directory** — [http://www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast\\_directory.php](http://www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast_directory.php)





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reserves, will they also become responsible for podcasts of course related content? At the very least, the library may find itself responsible for teaching users about podcasting and how to use the new resources that are available at their institution through podcasts. Perhaps the library will also find itself checking out digital audio players with course content to students who wish to hear a lecture but do not have a computer or Internet connection of their own. One way that academic libraries can incorporate coursecasting is to provide access to the current day or week's worth of course podcasts on the library Website. Also, libraries could further supplement coursecasting by building Web pages that not only have access to the podcasts for a particular course, but also include links to relevant library resources and possibly podcasts on using those resources. For example, on a page with access to the podcasts for a particular biology course, the library could also include links to the subject guides for biology as well as any other information on using library resources. This could, of course, become difficult to manage as more course lectures become available as podcasts.

The popularity of podcasting as a method of disseminating information has grown rapidly in the past year. As an evolving technology, podcasting (and coursecasting) is not without

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## NISO Metasearch Initiative Targets Next Generation of Standards and Best Practices

by **Cynthia Hodgson** <chodgson@niso.org>, **Andrew Pace** (North Carolina State University) <andrew\_pace@ncsu.edu>, and **Jenny Walker** (Ex Libris, Inc.) <jenny@exlibris-usa.com>

*This is the first of a two-part article on the Metasearch Initiative of the National Information Standards Organization (NISO). Part 1 focuses on the issues that prompted the creation of the Metasearch Initiative and reviews NISO's plan of action. Part 2, which will appear in an upcoming issue, will review findings and recommendations of the NISO metasearch committees.*

Metasearch — also called parallel search, federated search, broadcast search, and cross-database search — has become commonplace in the information community's vocabulary. All speak to a common theme of allowing search and retrieval to span multiple databases, sources, platforms, protocols, and vendors at once.

The Z39.50 protocol has been the primary mechanism for providing metasearch since the first version of the standard was issued in 1988. This standard, which was initially de-

signed to search across disparate library catalogs, has several drawbacks in today's metasearch environment. It was not designed for operation in a Web environment; it was not intended for article-level citations; and for many content providers it is overly complex to implement, thus creating a high barrier of entry.

Metasearch software providers have implemented a variety of protocols to ensure access to content including: Z39.50, IT search standards such as SQL, newer Web standards such as XQuery, customized proprietary point-to-point connections, metadata harvesting, and HTML parsing or screen scraping. This multiplicity of protocols that must be supported and the lack of commonly implemented standards, best practices, and tools make the metasearch environment less efficient for the system provider, the content provider, and ultimately the end-user.

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ians may be happening just when the need for them is lessening.


To return to my fiddling metaphor, **Campbell** suggests "Librarians *must* widen the discussion and raise the questions concerning the future of academic libraries" instead of making beautiful music while our libraries/our profession are being consumed by the flames of newer technology (page 28). He doesn't try to answer the question but emphasizes that each campus must confront this question.

I think he is right but I find it difficult to come up with some possible answers that I could advance on my own campus to get the discussion going. I guess I would like to return to the ideas [a bit updated] advanced last year in my tongue in cheek short story in *ATG* of what the librarian whose library was destroyed by a tsunami should do (March 2005):

- Buy as many eBooks and e-journals as possible and get the faculty to use them for teaching purposes instead of our legacy printed collections that cost people and space.

- Tell the faculty to rely upon **Google Print** for old books and give them an account with which they can buy new books from **Amazon.com**.
- Build new space, or convert the old space generated by selling off all the books that can be found in **Google**, for enormous information commons complexes for student study needs. Provide most services 18 hours a day but keep it open the other six hours.
- If our newly emptied old buildings still have surplus space — turn them into gyms, theatres, etc., for all the people who are spending too much time in front of their computers.
- Replace paper and books conservators/bindery staff with more systems librarians able to deal with the new problems that come with digital forms of information.
- Look at the work that needs to be done and hire accordingly. Hire more subject specialists and make sure help desks are manned with people who know what they are doing. When a professional librarian is needed, hire him or her but don't start

with a near religious belief in the need to find clones for ourselves. Cut the rest of the staff to the point that only those needed to do the above are left.

Do I really believe the above? I think I may be "just kidding." Or am I? I suggest that you find **Campbell's** article and spend some time thinking about these questions. 

*P.S. I would like to thank **Mark Miller** of **Montgomery College** in Takoma Park, Maryland who kindly pointed out that in my September 2005 Backtalk article I referred to myself as an ex-patriot when I should have said that I was an "expatriate." Thanks so much for correcting me. All my patriotic relatives back home in Idaho will be much relieved. — AF*

### Endnotes

1. Campbell, Jerry D. (2006). Changing a cultural icon: The academic library as a virtual destination. *Educause Review*, 41, 16-30.

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emerging issues that include archiving and copyright concerns. How libraries will use this technology remains to be seen in many cases, but it may become more important if coursecasting proves to be a positive supplement to the university or college student's learning experience.


According to the most recent **Pew Internet & American Life Project Report on Podcasting** (April 2005), over 22 million American Adults own an iPod or other MP3 player and of those 22 million, 29% have downloaded a podcast. More specifically, almost 50% of the people who own an iPod or other MP3 player and have downloaded podcasts are between the ages of 18-28. The report is available from [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/154/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/154/report_display.asp). Accessed 20 January 2006. 

## I Hear the Train A Comin' from page 84

participation? If the price is right, yes. In the United States, the requested amount is \$5,000 a year for three years for Ph.D. institutions, \$2,000 a year for schools offering Master's degrees, and \$1,000 for institutions with undergraduate programs. More than 400 libraries worldwide have committed to the project. Combined with a National Endowment for the Humanities challenge grant, the library fundraising arms secured commitments of \$1.3 million in its first year.

To be sure, there is a free rider problem that the **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** has not fully overcome. Some schools have not contributed (and may not be aware of the importance of their contribution), but nonetheless benefit from the contributions of others. The **SEP** has an outreach plan that targets institutions meeting criteria such as size, location, the kind of degree in philosophy it awards, and so forth. When a reader

from one of the targeted institutions attempts to access an entry, the system (using IP checking) returns a note at the top of the page gently reminding the reader to speak to his/her library about the benefits of financial participation. The hope is that, much like **NPR's** pledge drives (or **bepress's** own quasi-open access policy), the demonstrated researcher interest will convince the library to support the model.

The **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** is forging a new path in scholarly publishing. It is neither a subscription service nor an author pays model. Its content is free, but only so long as the community that benefits from it provides the necessary funding to attain its endowment threshold. It is operated not by individual scholars or university administrators or libraries, but by a combination of all the above. Will the **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** succeed? Early returns, both in terms of content quality and financial planning, are promising. Will the model be replicated and extended by others? Time will tell. 

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He also held various sales and marketing positions in **Addison Wesley** and **Simon and Schuster**. **Beale** holds a bachelor's degree from **Loughborough University**, UK, has studied extensively in the United States, and is an active member of the **UK Publishers Association**. He and his family will be relocating to the Ann Arbor, Michigan area in the coming months, and he will be

based out of the **ProQuest** global headquarters there. [www.il.proquest.com/](http://www.il.proquest.com/)

Do you have **ARTstor**? We do in our library and are learning more about its functionality and content every day. Was talking to **Bruce Heterick** <[Bruce.Heterick@jstor.org](mailto:Bruce.Heterick@jstor.org)> about it. (He has been home recuperating from double-hip replacement surgery. Ouch!) Anyway, **Bruce** says that **Max Marmor** and **Kathryn Wayne** will be doing an article on **ARTstor** for *ATG*. Stay tuned.

A fascinating article to read — "Vatican 'cashes in' by putting price on the Pope's

copyright" by **Richard Owen** in *The Times*, January 23, 2006. Seems that the **Vatican** has decided to impose strict copyright on all papal pronouncements. [www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0%2c%2c13509-2005615%2c00.html](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0%2c%2c13509-2005615%2c00.html)

And, finally, be sure and read **Bob Nardini's** **Issues in Vendor/Library Relations**, this issue, p.75. It reminded me of my father, a research economist. When I was in high school, he gave me a small book called *How To Lie With Statistics*. It taught me a lot, just like **Bob's** column on numbers ... very ... umm ... factual.

Signing off. See you in April. 